

No. 36.

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EVERY WEDNESDAY.

STANFIELD HALL.

By J. F. SMITH,

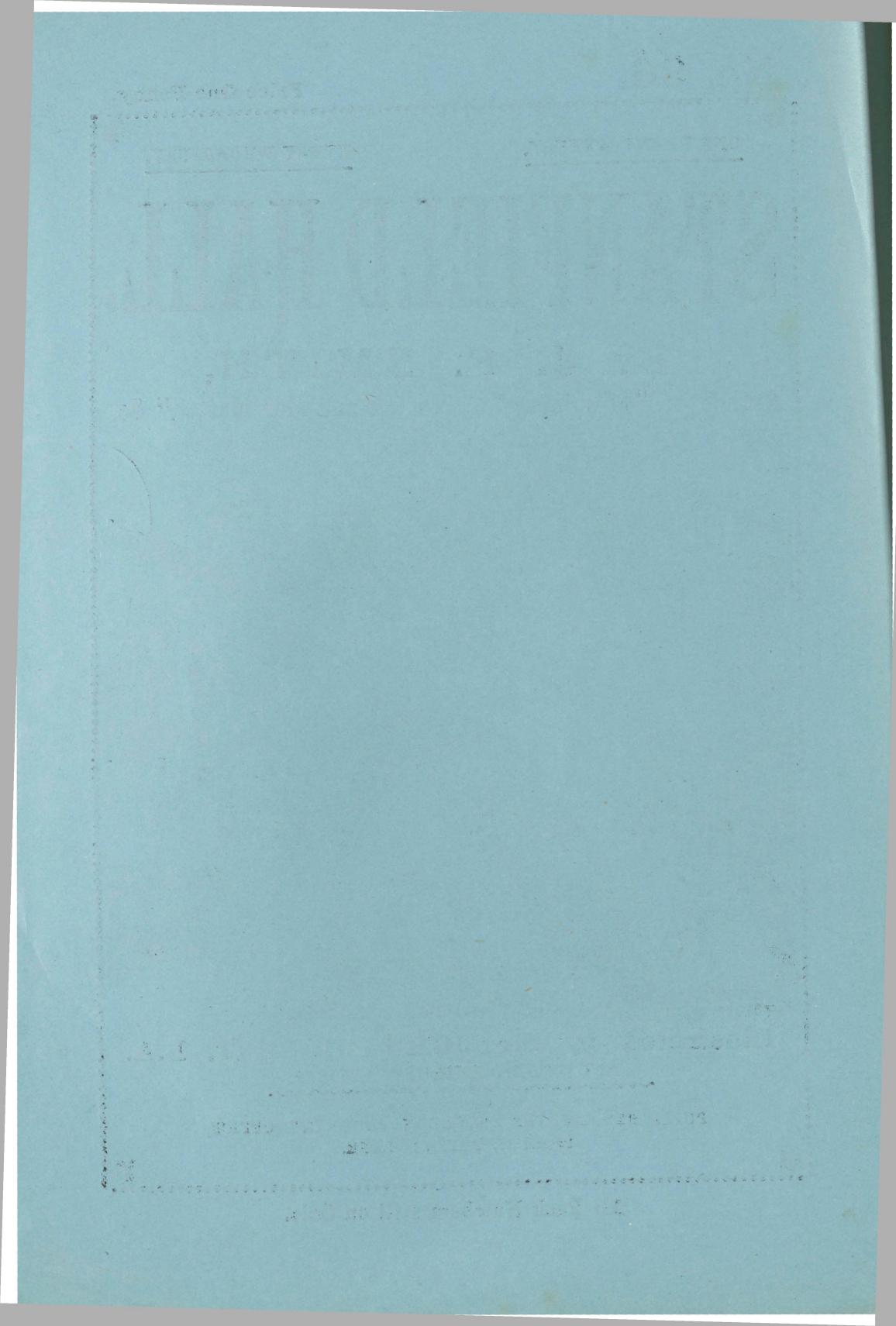
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LONDON :
PUBLISHED AT THE "LONDON JOURNAL" OFFICE,
12 and 13, FETTER LANE.

All Back Numbers still on Sale.



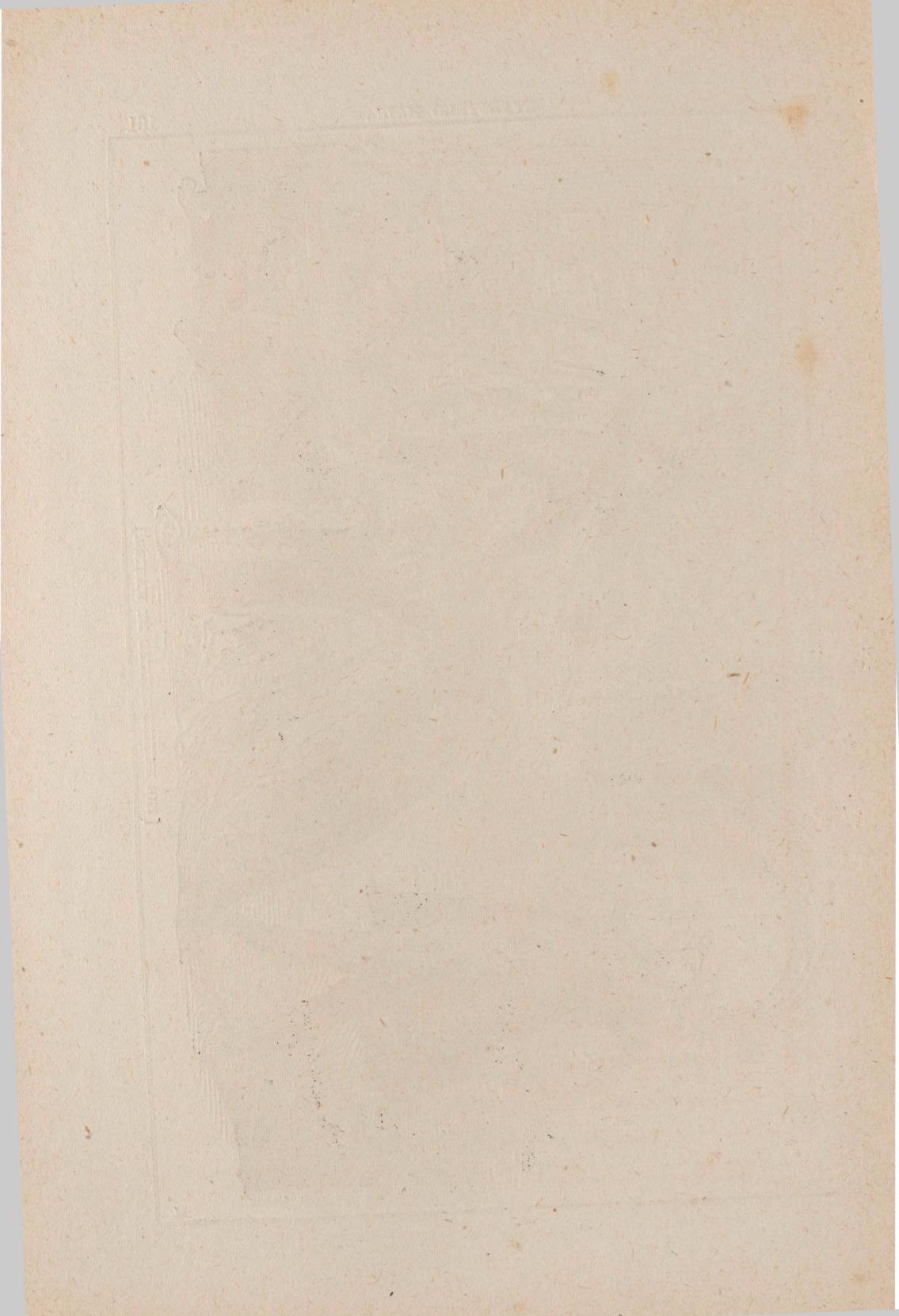
VOL. II.



[THE HEIRESS RESCUED BY WALTER.]

STANFIELD HALL.

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"I will."

"Without one doubt of me or thought of treachery?" added the jester.

"Without one doubt of thee or thought of treachery," said Walter, firmly, and at the same time extending his hand to his companion; "for what is friendship if a doubt can shake it?"

"And I will prove a friend," exclaimed Patch, returning the pressure warmly. "Thy hand shall not be truer to thy purpose than I will be to thee. Clouds thou canst not see are gathering round thee; thy bark will soon be tossed upon a sea where sunken rocks and shifting sands threaten the inexperienced mariner. But fear not thou; the fool," he added bitterly, "whose wit is only sharp enough to barb a jest, or win a courtier's smile, shall pilot thee in safety through the storm."

"Thanks," replied the young man, alarmed at the warning tone of the speaker, even while he gathered confidence from his promise of safety. He had already tried his faithfulness, and knew he could rely on him.

"When the masque is played," resumed the jester, "and thou art fairly robbed, write as in deep despair to Wolsey; say thou hast retired to France until his indignation shall be passed; implore his pardon, curse thy luckless stars, act all the madness of the ambitious boy whose dream of greatness accident hath blighted."

"Retire to France!" faltered his bewildered hearer, to whom the idea of a separation from the object of his affections was insupportable. "Is there no other way?"

"Tut!" interrupted his friend, "I did not mean to put thy patience to so hard a trial. Old as I am, I still remember what love is—its self-tormenting doubts and jealousies, its sighs and April tears. The seeming robbery accomplished and thy letter to the cardinal despatched, return at once to London.

"To London!" repeated Walter in a tone of joy, which showed how great a burden was removed.

"Knowest thou one Marriet, a rich Lombard merchant and money-lender in the City?" demanded Patch, without paying any seeming attention to his emotion.

The reassured lover inclined his head to intimate that he did.

"Show him this token," continued the speaker, plucking one of the innumerable silver bells from his cap, and placing it in his companion's hand, "and he will shelter thee. Shouldst thou need gold, the miser's hand will count it down unsparingly before thee upon no better pledge than this same worthless bauble. Remain with him till I come or send for thee. Fear not," he added, seeing that the young man was about to speak; "fear not for the Lady Mary. She shall not lack protection in thy absence. I will watch over her with more than a lover's care—with all a father's love. She will be safe until we meet again."

Patch kept his promise ; for, as our readers have doubtless long ere this discovered, he was no ordinary man, but one who pinned his faith upon his word. There were more mysteries about the jester than his cap and bells, as time will most probably unfold ; but we must not anticipate our story.

An object is not more truly reflected in a mirror than are the frowns and smiles of greatness in a court. The old nobility, at the head of whom was the Duke of Norfolk, had never forgiven Wolsey his extraordinary rise in Henry's favour, or his magnificence, which eclipsed their own feudal state ; still less could they understand his character, for they were as far removed from his genius as his greatness. The Catholic party, who were chiefly led by Warham, the primate, and Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, beheld with mistrust the suppression of the smaller monasteries, which the cardinal had commenced, having obtained bulls to authorise the measure both from Clement and the preceding Popes, intending to devote their revenues to the foundation of colleges and schools of learning.

Both of these parties beheld with pleasure the first appearance of coldness in the monarch towards his minister. Many who had been constant attendants on his levées now neglected them, and the chapel of the palace, which was formerly thronged when his eminence officiated, was, unless the king was present, comparatively deserted. Wolsey, though secretly galled, bore the insults of the Court with proud indifference or cold contempt. Although, in all probability, he foresaw his downfall, he knew that the hour was not yet at hand ; fate had reserved the favourite one triumph more.

On the Sunday after the departure of Walter the sacred edifice was thronged ; Henry, as usual, was present. But little attention was paid by the crowd of nobles and courtiers to the Mass ; all were in expectation of a scene ; it having been whispered that, as soon as the ceremony was over, the captain of the guard had received orders to arrest the cardinal, and the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk to demand from him, in the king's name, the great seal.

Anne Boleyn, too, was there, in all the pride of her beauty and ambitious whisperings of her heart, doubtless anticipating the downfall of her enemy, for such she regarded Wolsey to be, since in council he had recommended her removal from Court until the question of the divorce should be decided. The only drawback to her contentment was the sight of the fair girl who knelt by the seat of the unhappy Katherine, and on whom Henry, from time to time, cast glances which ill accorded with the sacred precincts.

Just as the solemn service had commenced, Sir John Perrot, whose absence for several days had been noticed, made his appearance with a large missal under his arm. Advancing to the *prie-Dieu*, before the king, he reverentially placed the book upon

it, and withdrew to his seat amongst the courtiers, as unconcerned as though he had but performed his customary service.

There were two hearts which beat the lighter as they beheld the act of the knight—the cardinal's and our old friend Patch's, who from a gallery above was intently watching the scene.

The impatient tyrant, who imagined that he alone understood what was meant, opened the jewelled-clasped volume, and found, as he expected, a letter between its illuminated leaves ; it was bound, after the fashion of the times, with a silken thread, and sealed. We need not inform our readers that it was Wolsey's letter to Campeggio.

As the ceremony proceeded, the monarch broke the seal, and whilst his courtiers imagined him absorbed in prayer, eagerly occupied himself in perusing its contents. After the usual salutations to his brother legate, the letter continued thus :

“Knowing that his grace hath a most subtle judgment, and, by his learning and skill in confuting heresy, hath deserved well, not only of the holy father, but the whole Church,—I trust that the commission directed to us will extend to the satisfying of this matter, which proceedeth from no vain lusts, but an unquiet conscience. He hath ever been to me a princely master, and my greatness is but the shadow of his favour exalting my unworthiness ; wherefore I will bear with no injustice towards him. I have recommended the withdrawal of Mistress Anne Boleyn, of whom you speak, from Court, to silence all unnecessary scandal ; albeit she is of unblemished name touching her woman's prudence. Should the Emperor, who taketh bitterly the cause of his aunt, albeit he once made question of the legitimacy of the Princess Mary when proposed that he should marry her, tamper in this matter, either with thee or with Rome, set both thy words and countenance, as I shall do, against it. Remember that justice is due to all, but how much more so to the illustrious prince who demands it from the Church at our unworthy hands ! Trust not too implicitly to the bearer of this ; he is one in whom I have slight confidence. His grace's commands, which to me are laws, made him my messenger in this, which else had been trusted to another.”

The concluding part of the letter treated of the manner of Campeggio's travelling, and the ceremonial of his entry into London, where their joint court was to be held. It is easy to understand now why Walter was directed to permit himself to be robbed so easily.

“So,” muttered Henry, after he had perused the missive, so different from what he expected, “this is the servant they would deprive me of ! Faithful as when first I trusted him ; cautious only for my advantage ; prudent, even to his own danger, when 'tis to serve his master. Knaves !” he added, glancing on the

principal enemies of his re-established favourite a look which, could they have interpreted, would have made many tremble, "I'll punish them as reptiles should be punished. I'll make them lick the very dust beneath their victim's feet."

Like all men of violent passion, Henry proceeded to extremes. The circumstance which had most weakened his minister in his favour was the recommending the retirement of Anne Boleyn; but it was now, if not satisfactorily, at least sufficiently, explained. Perhaps the passion which the licentious monarch began to feel for the orphan heiress of Stanfield rendered him less susceptible in the matter, and he determined that the reparation to his favourite should be as signal as his former coldness had been unmerited.

At that part of the Mass where the officiating priest pronounces—

"*Lavabo inter innocentes manus meas*"
(I will wash my hands among the innocent)—

it is customary to present him with water, into which he dips his fingers—figuratively to purify himself for the approaching sacrifice. On all previous occasions when Wolsey had celebrated the sacred mystery in the royal chapel, there had been a struggle amongst the nobles for the honour of serving him, but on the present no one offered to stir. It was too tempting an opportunity to realise the fable of the ass kicking at the dying lion for the courtiers to neglect it. There was naturally a pause from the circumstance in the solemn rite. His enemies smiled at the cardinal's embarrassment, and wondered how he would extricate himself from it. Their wonder, however, was but of short duration; for, to their astonishment and terror, the king, leaving his elevated seat, advanced towards the altar, and, taking the golden ewer and basin from the attendant deacon, offered it himself to Wolsey—an honour never, perhaps, conferred before or since by a crowned head upon any but the sovereign pontiff.

"Not to the unworthy servant!" exclaimed the cardinal, in a voice of deep emotion, "but to the heavenly Master whose livery he wears, be all the honour of the king's humility."

Bowing his head to conceal the grateful tears which fell upon Henry's hand, the speaker dipped his finger in the water, and as soon as the monarch had returned to his seat, resumed the celebration of the Mass.

"So, my lords," exclaimed the king, as he left the chapel, leaning on the arm of the triumphant churchman, "it seems that we must do your duty for you. Perhaps," he added, "the blood of Howard, Warrene, and De Vere is too proud to serve where Henry Tudor leads, as if our favour could not raise the vilest scullion to be your equals."

"In rank," said De Vere, firmly, the proud stream of his Norman ancestors rushing to his temples, "but not in blood."

This was a sore point with the fiery monarch, who frequently imagined that his Norman nobles looked down upon him as the descendant of Owen Tudor, a simple Welsh gentleman, forgetful that by his mother's side he was equally a Plantagenet.

"Tis well, my lords," he exclaimed ; "we may find the means, perchance, to tame this pride of blood. The hand which struck the traitor Buckingham is not palsied yet."

This was strong language, even from Henry VIII., to the son of a man who had so materially contributed to place his father upon the throne : but gratitude was never the failing of his race.

Wolsey, who foresaw how necessary the assistance of the nobility would be to the accomplishment of his master's designs, interposed, and skilfully played the mediator.

Oxford apologised for his warmth, for the allusion to the unfortunate Duke of Buckingham showed him that he was treading near a precipice. His excuses were not too gracefully received, and the prince, muttering something about fools and fantastic knaves, withdrew to his cabinet, still leaning on the arm of his minister.

"You have done an unwise thing, De Vere," whispered the Duke of Norfolk, as their sovereign and his favourite left them ; "you have made a relentless enemy, and disposed the king against you."

"Be it so," replied the haughty peer, turning upon his heel. "I can yield to the lion, but disdain to crouch before the jackal. Your grace's humour is more pliant, perhaps."

A dark scowl from the duke followed the retreating form of the speaker. His grace was one of the most servile courtiers of the day ; indeed, so much so that he afterwards pronounced sentence of death upon his own niece, the unfortunate Anne Boleyn, after repeatedly interrupting her defence. A few minutes afterwards, and he was seated in the cabinet with Henry and Wolsey.

That same day two orders were given which occasioned much surprise and gossiping at Court. The Earl of Oxford was commanded to retire to his estates, and Sir Thomas Boleyn quietly ordered to withdraw his daughter to Hever Castle, his family residence in Kent, until the question of the queen's divorce should be decided.

On the 8th of November, 1528, Campeggio, after a tedious journey from Dover, arrived near London ; but refused, contrary to custom, to make a triumphal entry into the city, wishing, most probably, to give a mournful rather than a joyful air to his mission. He took up his abode at Bath House, a mansion belonging to Wolsey, close to Temple Bar, some remains of which are still to be seen bearing the cardinal's arms.

At the first public interview between the legate and the king, everything passed in the usual smooth and complimentary style. He addressed Henry as the defender of the faith and deliverer of

the Pope, who had recently been a prisoner to the Emperor, with other flattering remarks, particularly gratifying at such a period from a Papal legate, although at the present day they would be thought dearly purchased by the gift of two hundred and forty thousand pounds, which sum Henry had lately presented to the Pope to assist him in his difficulties.

In their private interview, however, the tone of Campeggio was altered. He used many arguments to dissuade the king from the steps he wished to pursue—an interference which the impatient prince resented, declaring that he feared the Pope had broken his word with him, since it seemed that his eminence had rather come to annul than confirm his marriage. To these reproaches the legate replied by showing the decretal bull, but refused to let it out of his hands, even for a moment. With all this conduct the anxious monarch was greatly dissatisfied, but received some consolation from the assurance of Campeggio that he was deputed to address the queen in the name of the Pope, and exhort her to enter a religious house; ending the question by her voluntary retirement from the world. But this advice, coming even from so venerable a quarter, had no weight with Katherine, who modestly but firmly replied that she could not break the sacrament of her marriage, for that, if others were disposed to do so, she felt it binding on her conscience still. While the subject was thus agitated, Henry's deportment towards his unfortunate queen was such as to maintain the appearance of regard and respect which he professed to feel towards her.

Finding all hopes of persuading the queen to a compromise, by entering a cloister, useless, preparations were made for holding the legatine court in the great hall of Blackfriars, which had been selected from its close proximity to the old palace of Bridewell, where both Henry and Katherine were residing.

On the day appointed, the two legates entered the court in state, and seated themselves as judges on chairs covered with cloth of gold. On the right and left were rich canopies and seats for the king and queen. Wolsey, as Hall in his *Chronicles* takes care to specify, assumed precedence over his brother cardinal. The scribes, who were doctors in divinity, sat below the judges, while the counsel for their majesties were ranged at each end within the court. Henry was seated upon his throne.

Anne Boleyn, according to the authority above quoted, was in the hall amongst the other spectators, and surveyed, no doubt with feelings which could not easily be described, the strange scene acted before her; although, since the order for her removal from Court, the ambitious dreams in which she had indulged had gradually faded away.

But the personage in the court on whom all eyes were fixed was the injured queen, who was seated upon the chair of state nearly

opposite to her relentless husband. Katherine, on this occasion, sustained her part with all the spirit and dignity which her previous conduct had led the public mind to expect, and with passionate indignation manifested her last ineffectual resistance to the power of those who were appointed to hear and decide her cause.

After silence had been proclaimed, and the commission of the judges read, a herald advanced into the centre of the court, and, bowing before the king's throne, exclaimed in a loud voice, "Henry, King of England!"

"Here," said the prince, not giving him time to complete the citation so galling to his pride.

Wolsey marked the tone of his master's voice and trembled.

The herald then proceeded to the spot where the queen was seated. This time he was permitted to complete his duty without interruption.

"Katherine, Queen of England," he pronounced, "come into court."

All eyes were fixed upon the party summoned, who rose with quiet majesty from her seat, and, looking round the court twice, essayed to speak. It was a bitter moment with the unhappy princess, called upon, after so many years, to defend the validity of her marriage and the legitimacy of her child. The proud blood of her imperial race flushed her generally pale features as she at last broke silence :

"Alas! my lords, and is it now a question whether I be a king's wife or no, when I have been wedded to him almost twenty years, and in this fashion doubt never being made before, when I have borne unto him divers children? Alas! sir," she added, turning to the king, "in what have I offended you? Have I not been to you a true and humble wife, ever conformable to your will and pleasure? If there be any just cause ye can allege against me, either of dishonesty or other matter, I am content to depart, to my shame and rebuke; but if there be none, I pray you let me have justice at your hands. I am a poor, weak woman, uncounselled and unfriended."

"Counsel hath been named," replied Wolsey, "and your majesty——"

"My lords," continued the queen, casting on both the cardinals a withering glance, "I do reject ye as my judges. My lord of York, whose pestilent breath hath blown the coal of discord 'twixt the king and me, is mine enemy—my husband's subject—his greatness the creation of his favour;—how then shall I expect justice at such hands? Therefore I do appeal to Rome—there only can my cause be truly judged. And humbly do entreat your majesty, even in the way of charity, to spare me until I know what counsel and advice my friends in Spain may give me; and if you will not, then must your pleasure be fulfilled."

Having thus spoken, Katherine of Arragon made a low curtsey to the king, and leaning on the arm of Griffith, her receiver-general, was about to leave the court, when Henry commanded the herald to summon her again.

The heiress of Stanfield, who had been amongst the few attendants who adhered to the falling fortunes of the unhappy queen, whispered her as she reached the door that she was summoned.

"Oh," said Katherine, in a loud tone, so as to be heard by all the assembly; "it is no matter; this is no court for me, therefore I will not tarry."

Nor could she be prevailed on to return or appear again before the legates.

Even the lustful Henry, moved by the noble bearing of his afflicted wife, declared that she had been as true and obedient to him as he could desire. "She hath," he continued,—melted, perhaps, to some portion of his former tenderness by the pitiable condition of one who little merited to be thus degraded,—"all the virtuous qualities that ought to be in a woman of her dignity. My first doubts," he continued, "were suggested by the demurs of the Bishop of Tarbe, concerning the legitimacy of the Princess Mary, question being at that time entertained of her marriage. These doubts, once suggested, were nurtured by despair of issue from the queen, and not by any disinclination for her person or her age; with which I could be as well content," he hypocritically added, "as with any woman's living."

The falsehood of this assertion could only be equalled by the unblushing coolness with which it was made.

"This declining of our authority and appeal to Rome," observed Campeggio, who had his private instructions from the Pope, "controls our will, and must prolong your highness's doubt in this same matter."

"Indeed!" replied the king, casting a ferocious glance upon the legates; "methinks you trifle with me; beware, lest I contrive to solve the knot without Rome's further aid."

The Italian priest, who trembled for his bishopric which he held in England, hastened to assure the angry prince that he would immediately write to the holy father, stating to him the opinions of the English prelates, and the obstinacy of the queen in refusing to listen to the advice which in his name he had tendered to her, of retiring to a convent.

"Add," said Henry, rising from his seat, "that there are other churches than the Church of Rome—other barks on which men seek salvation than the bark of Peter. Hitherto I have been an obedient son—let him beware how his injustice forces me to pry into his title. Justice refused when sued for may be at last demanded. By Saint George!" he added, striking with his

clenched fist upon the table, "rather than live this puppet slave—this toy of Rome—I'll try my sceptre's strength against his crosier. Mince not my words. The wrath of kings may raise as fierce a storm as Luther's preaching, or as Bourbon's sword. Clement's deceit and Charles's treachery have not yet subdued me."

As soon as the unhappy queen reached her privy chamber, the pride which had sustained her when before the legates at once gave way, and casting her arms about the neck of her only child, the Princess Mary—who was quite old enough to feel her mother's wrongs and the peril of her own position—the high-souled woman wept bitterly. The orphan of Stanfield, who felt grateful to her royal mistress for the protection she had extended both to her mother and herself, hastily poured a small quantity of Cyprus wine into a golden cup which stood upon the manchet table ; and, with the tears of sympathy yet warm upon her cheek, presented it to the crushed and humbled Katherine. To her surprise and terror the young princess dashed it from her hand, and fixing upon her an indignant, sullen look, demanded if she wished to poison her sovereign.

"Poison !" repeated the astonished maiden.

"Poison, minion, was the word," repeated the gloomy child ; for even at that early age the princess gave indications of the jealous, suspicious, cruel character which rendered her after-reign so unpopular in England ; and which, perhaps, after all, her mother's sorrows and the many bitter mortifications of her childhood contributed to form, for women are seldom naturally cruel.

For a few moments our heroine was thunderstruck. For several days she had observed that the wayward speaker had treated her with marked dislike, but had attributed it to her temper, which displayed itself in passionate ebullitions to all, rather than to any personal distaste. The innocent girl was far from suspecting that the openly expressed admiration of the king, and the licentious glances which he so lavishly bestowed upon her, but which, in the natural purity of her heart, she had passed unnoticed, had caused a suspicion both in the mind of the queen and princess unfavourable to her devotion to their service.

"Katherine—royal mistress !" she exclaimed, throwing herself at the footstool of the unhappy wife of Henry—"you do not think me false—you do not believe the orphan girl you have befriended capable of treachery ? One smile—one look—nay, but a word," she added, "to dispel this horrid doubt, or my heart will break !"

"So young," murmured the still agitated queen, recoiling from her touch, "and so deceitful ! Heaven forgive thee, girl ; for thou hast much to answer."

"You hear !" said the princess, sternly, at the same time pointing to the door.

"What mystery is this? Indeed you wrong me!"

"Begone!" continued the scowling child.

"Who are my accusers?"

"The queen would be alone," exclaimed Katherine of Arragon, rising from her chair, and drawing up her stately person to its full height. "We are not yet uncrowned; the seat you dream of is not empty yet."

"Heaven forgive my gracious mistress her unjust suspicions," sobbed the orphan as she retired from the chamber, "and protect her servant, who now indeed is friendless."

Scarcely knowing which way to direct her steps, overwhelmed by the sudden and degrading suspicion, the bewildered girl tottered through several of the apartments which formed the suite of her deceived benefactress, nor paused till she reached a large saloon hung with arras and furnished with rich cushions. Here her little remaining strength gave way, and she would have fallen to the ground had not a strong arm sustained her.

She started at the touch. That arm was Henry's.

CHAPTER XI.

Love seeks not happiness obtained through tears;
Knoweth no pleasure in a selfish joy,
Blighteth not the flower beyond its eager reach,
Or planteth thorns lest other hands should pluck;
Its abnegation is its seal of truth.—"THE PURITAN."

"IN tears, sweetheart!" exclaimed the amorous king, gazing upon her with an expression which brought the warm blood into the maiden's cheek. "Marry, beshrew their hearts whose lack of kindness could dim such eyes as thine! What is thy cause of sorrow? Let those who have angered thee take heed of me."

"A whim, a girl's caprice, a thought, the oppression of a wayward heart; nothing, your highness, that should raise a serious thought within a monarch's mind," answered the generous girl, determined, under any circumstances, not to allude to Katherine's unkindness or the Princess Mary's unjust suspicions.

"Tut, May-bird! it is fixed on thee oftener than thy modesty supposes. We feel no common interest in thee, and will mark that interest by no common favour. The arrows of thine eyes have hit a loftier mark than thou hast dreamt of yet. Tell me," he added, in a softer tone, "why do I find thee weeping?"

"Sire," said the orphan, trembling with apprehension of an avowal which, even from a king, her soul would have repelled with scorn, "my heart acknowledges your bounty to your old servant's grandchild, but the protection of my royal mistress more than repays the service of his life. 'Tis past," she added, struggling

to regain her composure; "woman's tears are but as April showers, falling 'twixt sunshine. Permit me to retire."

"So," he muttered, in a lower tone of voice, still retaining her hand, "Kate hath rated thee, sweet wench?"

"Your highness!"

"Tut! I see it all; I know a jealous woman's tongue lacketh discretion, breaketh all bounds, and runs a tilt with prudence."

"Alas! your grace but she hath many griefs," interrupted his prisoner, for she had not yet been able to withdraw her hand from his grasp, "threatened by the loss of your most princely favour and affection."

"Is such a loss a grief?" demanded Henry, with a meaning smile.

"As queen and mother doubly so to her."

"And have not I my sorrows?" interrupted the monarch, "and few to feel for me? Bound by a chain which conscience tells me Heaven approves not, tormented by a love," he added, fixing on her a glance which spoke the passionate admiration of his heart, "which even I must pause ere I avow,—for I would be loved as kings are seldom loved—not for my crown, but for myself alone,—I would possess a love such——"

"Such," added the heiress, determined if possible to prevent the avowal of his passion by not appearing to understand him,— "such as the royal Katherine feels, whose birth, though less than her virtues, renders her the mate of an imperial throne. Besides," she continued, "whose love, my liege, can ever equal hers who is the mother of your gracious child?"

"Yours!" exclaimed Henry, attempting to retain her hand. "Yours, for which I sigh. I gaze upon you, and forget my sceptre. I listen to the music of your voice, and earth seems dull without you. I tire," he continued, "of woman's flattery and man's deceit. I pine to find a heart which can forget I am a king, a tongue to speak with me in simple truth. The song of the untaught bird will oft entrance the ear more than the practised warbler in its gilded cage. Say, sweet one, canst thou love me?"

"As my king," replied the maiden, turning as pale as the marble pedestal against which she leant for support. "Yes—truly and humbly, as a subject ought."

"Forget I am your king," impatiently interrupted the royal libertine; "I have enough already of such lip homage. Canst love me as a man? as your own knight? as Henry would be loved?"

"No such evil thought hath ever tempted me. Frown not, sire, if I prefer the smile of Heaven even to yours; remember that, humble as I am, the love which failed to raise might still debase me."

"But it can raise thee, girl," he whispered, thinking that her

objections to become his mistress might give way before the temptation of even the distant hope of becoming his wife. "This hand can lead thee to so vast a height, the world shall lie like some rich garden at thy feet—place thee where men shall pin their fortunes on thy smile—where sorrow's chills and the sad storms of life shall never reach thee."

"I should turn giddy, my dread lord, and fall from such a pinnacle. I was not born for gazing on the sun—the valley suits my humble footsteps best; the path you name leads not to happiness."

"What," said Henry, "if it lead you to a throne?"

"It would not tempt me; conscience would haunt me with unholy dreams, memory remind me of her wrongs who sat there, terror and guilt overshadow it with evil. I see your grace," she added, "sports with my inexperience, or wished, perchance, to try me; but believe me, prince, I am too grateful to my royal mistress—to long the witness of her many virtues—to suffer such weak dreams to mock my reason."

"By Heavens, girl," said Henry—for even his coarse brutal nature could appreciate the purity of her motives—"but I am serious! The thrall which binds me in unholy fetters, despite Rome's subtle policy and wire-drawn pleadings, soon shall be dissolved. Then, when the chair is empty, and my hand is free——"

"My answer will be still unchanged," said the orphan, mildly. "Were your grace's state fitting to mine as now 'tis far above it, such wishes would be equally in vain."

"Dost tell me so?" exclaimed Henry, in a tone so harsh that the girl sank almost fainting on the pile of cushions near which she had been standing. "'Tis well; the whisperings I have heard, it seems, are true. Sir John de Corbey's accusation was not all a falsehood—the heiress of Stanfield loves a menial."

"Your highness, he you name is gently born, though little graced with fortune's misused gifts."

"A peasant knave who broke his trust to Wolsey, and lost or sold his letters to Campeggio."

"My life, your highness, upon Walter's faith."

"Dost brave me, minion!" continued the incensed and mortified monarch, his still handsome features flushed with anger. "Heed, lest I take thee at thy word. For thy springal, let him beware; the hour he sets his foot on English ground, by my unbroken faith, shall be his last! For thee," he added, "forget our passing jest—ha! ha! ha! But, by St. George, it was not badly played! Henry refused, and by a simple girl—ha! ha! As if a king would condescend to sue when with a word he might command—ha! ha!"

Turning on his heel, without deigning further notice of the maiden, the burly speaker quitted the apartment.

No sooner had the tyrant disappeared than the unhappy heiress felt the full misery of her position. Alone, without an adviser — persecuted by Henry, rejected by the queen — suspected, menaced, and trembling for her lover's safety more than for her own—many and bitter were the thoughts which crowded on her mind. She was startled from her painful reverie by the rustling of the arras near her, which, as the echo of the angry monarch's footsteps died away, was hastily drawn aside, and Katherine of Arragon, accompanied by the Princess Mary, entered the chamber. There was a noble sorrow on the countenance of the royal matron, for her own ears had convinced her how unfounded were her suspicions of the orphan girl; and with the impulse of a generous heart she hastened to make atonement.

Even the features of the scowling child were softened from their usual harsh expression.

"Thou wilt forgive me my injustice," exclaimed the queen, "and Mary's petulance; alas! poor child, her mother's griefs, and not her nature, spoke. I have witnessed all," she added—"thy unavailing generous defence of the rights of those who had so lately scorned thee."

"My gracious mistress," sobbed the heiress, sinking upon her knees, and kissing her extended hand, for her heart felt relieved of more than half its burden since she found her innocence acknowledged by Katherine,—"how can the object of your care atone for the sorrow of which she is the involuntary cause?"

"Not thou—not thou the cause," sighed the queen, "but Henry; his passions are as untamed as the relentless tiger's will. Heaven grant hereafter they prove not as destructive!"

"Madam," said the heiress, her former terrors of the king returning, "remove me from the Court, restore me to my peaceful convent's shade; I have known few happy moments since I quitted it. Alas!" she added, "how beautiful were earth, how rich in joys, did not man's evil nature mar the bounteous gifts! The serpent which tempted him in Eden dwells no longer in the garden, but in his heart."

"True, girl," said Katherine; "and where the reptile's venom fails to poison, its fangs will strive to wound. To-morrow," continued the speaker, trying to restrain her emotion, "I quit the palace of my husband for my manor of Kimbolton. I know the separation is doomed to be eternal. They would divorce me from my crown, from Henry's heart; separate me from my child, and brand upon my matron brow the seal of shame; but never," she added, "shall act of mine give sanction to a deed which robs my Mary of her birthright. My child may yet avenge me."

"I will avenge thee, mother," the young princess slowly pronounced, as if, at the same time, she mentally registered some

fearful vow—"if Mary lives, the wrongs of Katherine of Arragon shall be atoned."

History proves, when, after her brother's death, she mounted the throne, how fearfully the speaker kept her word.

"Fallen as I am," continued the queen, without apparently noticing her daughter's promise, but addressing herself to the orphan, "I can still offer a humble shelter to the child of my faithful servant, unless," she added with a bitter smile, "the exile from the Court affrights you."

"The mariner quits not the sea-tossed wreck to tread on land again with half the joy with which I shall fly from its treacherous precincts."

"'Tis well," said Katherine; "follow me to my closet. I will arrange with Griffiths for thy departure. Thou clingest to a broken fortune, girl, but a firm heart; and Heaven may one day recompense thee."

With these words the speaker once more raised the arras and retreated through the private door by which she had entered; the heiress caught the curtain as it fell, and drew back to make way for the princess, who was about to follow; when suddenly the young girl seemed to recollect something she wished to say, and motioned her to let fall the hangings. There was generally an unamiability of manner in all she did; but at the present moment she was positively gracious. Fixing her eyes upon her namesake, she said in her usual quiet voice:

"I have been unjust; but Lady Bouchier was to blame. I am but a child, and naturally feel my mother's injuries as keenly as my own. Do you forgive me?"

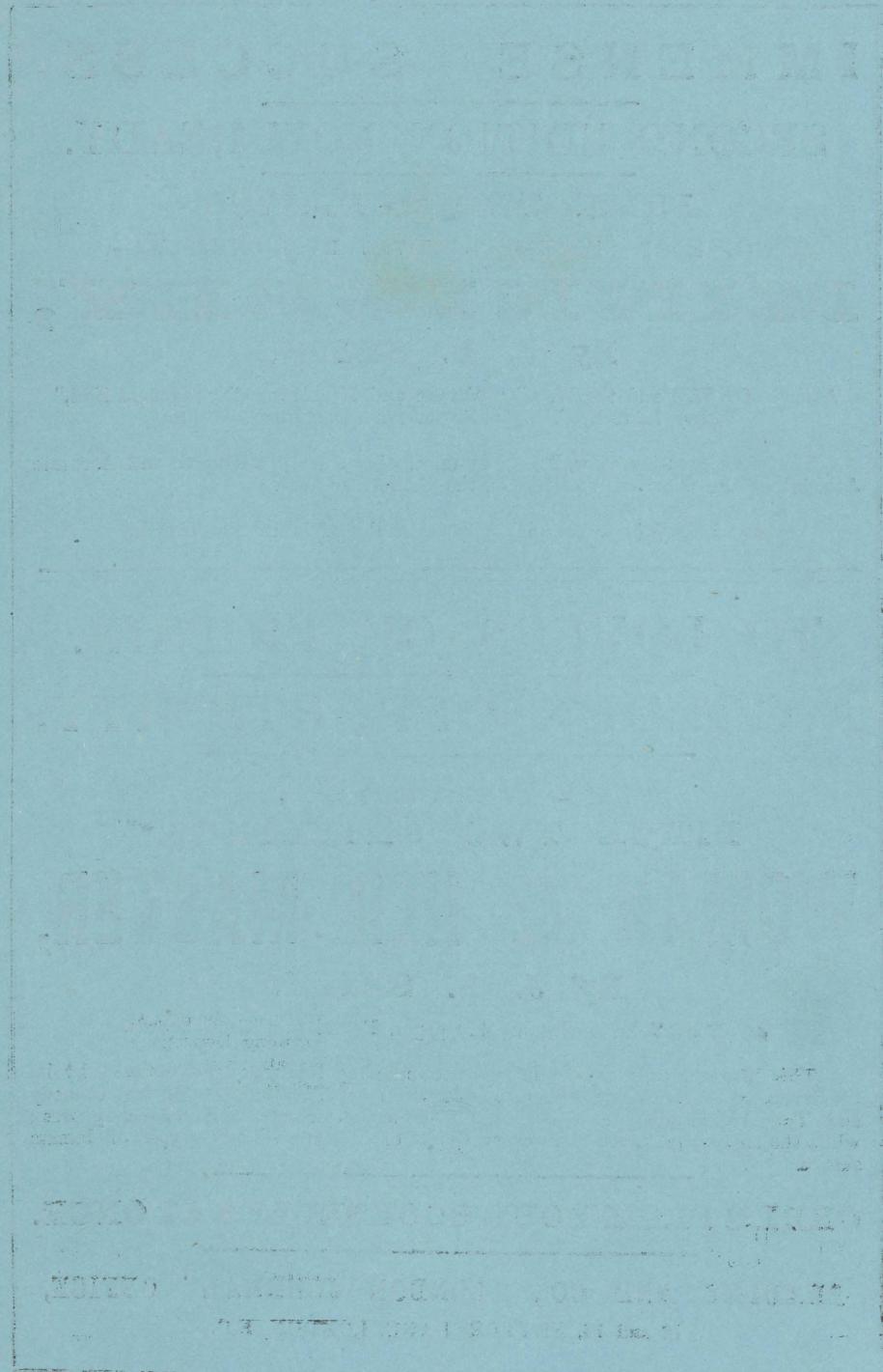
The only reply of the late object of her anger and suspicion was to kneel and kiss her hand.

"Perhaps," said the speaker, "I may be able to atone it; and here is a token that I will do so. I make few gifts; for to each gift there is a promise. Return this reliquary to me should fortune ever place it in my power to redeem my word. Whatever you ask," she added solemnly, "shall be granted; *be it a life, an honour, or a vengeance*, Mary will not fail to keep her word."

The child kissed the small jewelled shrine, which had been presented to her by her cousin the Emperor on her birthday, as she spoke; and removed the chain to which it was suspended from her neck, she passed it over the head of the heiress of Stanfield, who once more bent the knee to receive it. Little did she dream how precious would the gift in after years become.

"Hide it," said the donor, resuming her apathetic manner, "and attend me to the closet of the queen: guard it well; for I make not such gifts often."

The curtained entrance to the apartments of Katherine was once more drawn aside, and the haughty daughter of Henry VIII.



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